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My Love Affair with Carolina

By

DORIS WAUGH BETTS

Together with Tributes to Doris Betts by Elizabeth Evans, Lewellyn Betts, and Max Steele on the Occasion of Her Acceptance of the North Caroliniana Society Award for 1998

NORTH CAROLINIANA SOCIETY IMPRINTS

H. G. Jones, General Editor

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No. 2. *The Paul Green I Know* (1978)
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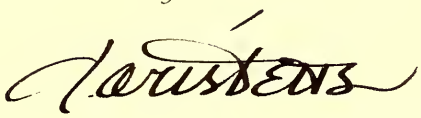
My Love Affair with Carolina

by



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PART I

My Love Affair with Carolina

by

Doris Waugh Betts

Delivered in Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill,
Prior to the Awards Ceremony on 12 June 1998

DORIS BETTS AND FRIENDS, 1994

(Photo by Diedra Laird, © 1994 *The Charlotte Observer)*

My Love Affair with Carolina

Doris Betts[1]

This North Caroliniana Society occasion occurs one week after my birthday and three weeks before I begin what the University calls "phased retirement," so you'll forgive me for looking back on my long love affair with Carolina—now that I've reached the age where, people say, the only thing you can sink your teeth into is a glass.

Actually I have lots more to bite off and chew, and I'm not as old as I hope to be. They say that the trouble with retirement is that it ruins your Saturdays. At one retirement dinner the emcee said sweetly, "Now you're going to watch the sunsets," and the retiree snapped back, "Yes, if I can stay up that late."

But as we read this society's membership list, the guest list, the names of previous honorees, it's clear that this University has awakened, and kept awake, the minds of a great many public servants in this state and nation.

Thomas Wolfe called Carolina "the unforgettable place buried in a pastoral wilderness." Chapel Hill is not so pastoral anymore; some of the wildlife belongs to fraternities. I've told my English Department chairman that when I retire there'll be fifty people standing outside my Greenlaw office with tears in their eyes—waiting to ask for my parking space. In today's traffic, it's hard to remember that two hundred years ago the first UNC student, Hinton James, walked to

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[1]Society President Willis P. Whichard introduced Doris Betts this way: "Will Willimon, Dean of the Chapel at a nearby small, new, twentieth-century school, tells of a conversation with a student in which the student indicated that he was taking Terry Sanford's course on creativity in state government. The always curious Willimon asked, 'Well, what's the course about? What's the subject matter?' 'Oh, I don't know,' replied the student, 'I'm studying him.' Doris Betts's students, too, may enroll in her courses to study her. If so, they have a worthy subject. This audience would be well advised to resist that temptation, however. We are going to study Doris in some depth later this evening. We should now hear what this extraordinary teacher and writer has to say to us. Doris, we eagerly await your remarks."

campus all the way from Wilmington; but what a pleasure it was in May when Chancellor Hooker recognized his great-great-great-grandson, Theodore Steger. Freshmen now live in a dorm that bears the name of the first young man who walked here to have his life changed.

In Chapel Hill, change is always overlaid on history and tradition. If you arrived in Chapel Hill today over US 15-501 crossing Morgan Creek (named for early settler Mark Morgan), and if you passed Finley Golf Course, you were driving by the site of Mr. Morgan's first residence. Morgan and his wife and all their children spent the winter of 1747 inside a giant hollow sycamore log that was over 12 feet in diameter—more crowded than having two roommates and a loft in one our dorms today.

They say that life is like a camel—it won't back up; but I'd like to back up my time and the University's parallel time today. The bell tower was built the year before I was born; you may recall that Gertrude Stein wrote about the young boxwoods she saw planted about it. Graham Memorial with its beautiful oak-paneled walls is as old as I am—and will soon be restored to the beauty we remember as a center for the honors program.

It's hard for us in 1998 to recapture all that this University at Chapel Hill symbolized to Tar Heel citizens during my childhood. The thirties were such hard economic times that parents and students didn't think of choosing a college because Choo-Choo Justice or Lennie Rosenbluth or Charlie Scott were in residence. My hard-working parents wanted to give me a better life—a richer life both in income and insight. No one in my family had ever gone to college. North Carolina did not have twelve grades in our public schools in my parents' youth, so my father—a textile mill worker—was half puzzled but nine-tenths awed by any adults who could find the time to keep reading books on into their twenties and thirties. "In Chapel Hill," he would say, "there are people who read the same book two or three times."

But Tar Heels on assembly lines and in cotton and tobacco fields felt not only the same awe that he felt; theirs shaded into an unease, an active nervousness about Chapel Hill where children might outgrow their raising, where too much book learning might snuff out common sense. I believe Bill Friday's family didn't send him here as an undergraduate because they thought the school excessively liberal. My father's closest friend had graduated here, and people in Statesville whispered that Summers Caldwell—and he wasn't the only one!—had gone off to Chapel Hill and learned to be an atheist. I used that theme, that fear of intellectual

freedom, in an early short story of mine, called "All That Glisters Isn't Gold."

Once my dad came here with his friend on a weekend to visit the campus. He never got over it. A university wasn't like a cotton mill at all, he said; you couldn't see what product it was turning out; unlike the weaving of cloth from thread, you wouldn't know for sure if a mind had been uplifted and nourished for maybe thirty more years. And you couldn't tell what obstreperous human beings might do with whatever they had learned. As far as he could tell, both Albert Schweitzer and Adolph Hitler had been smart and read books.

During that weekend, he stared at these Carolina boys passing on Polk Place—for all the students then were male. Probably that day in the mid-thirties he may have brushed elbows with Walker Percy, Shelby Foote, Vermont Royster, and so on, without a clue to what those boys were thinking and what they would do with their thoughts.

While in Chapel Hill, Dad bought a little wooden souvenir box of photographic cards of campus buildings, and at night he would deal these out on the kitchen oilcloth, like flash cards, so I could name each one: Old East. Manning Hall. Spencer Dorm. Playmakers Theater. We had no picture yet of the Institute of Government; I was seven when it was dedicated; and who could have imagined there would ever be a Dean Dome?

What I've learned since is that every older building on this campus might as well be made of glass—they're all transparent.

Inside Hill Hall is the ghost of the library it used to be. We can see through the walls of Swain Hall to its former cafeteria that students renamed Swine Hole. Whenever I pass the old Playmakers Theater I remember that during the Civil War General Sherman stabled the horses of the Michigan 9th Cavalry there—which led to the saying that, ever since, Michigan horses have been known for their intelligence and Carolina students for their horse sense. Or that the undergrad admissions office—now Blyden and Roberta Jackson Hall—used to be the Monogram Club with its carved wooden circus figures that later were exhibited in the Carolina Inn and now have been transplanted to the Hill Alumni Center.

I learned every card in Dad's wooden box. I wanted to go inside every building. I wanted to have a Pulpit Hill experience like Thomas Wolfe's, to meet Walter Spearman and Frank Graham and Howard Odum, to have Phillips Russell teach me how to write books. In fact, I burned to come here—Christopher Morley once wrote: "I used to burn, but now I smoulder/that's how I learn I'm growing older."

In those burning days, before Carolina was overwhelmed with admissions, Roy Armstrong used to visit high schools and recruit students, so his appearance in Statesville made me burn even hotter. And after 1940, girls could become undergraduates, and what if they had to be local residents? That was all right. I would move. I would sit in the new Forest Theater while Prof Koch taught Sophocles. Chancellor House would play his harmonica for me. I would see for myself the thrillingly dangerous communist Milton Abernethy just in time before

he left Chapel Hill to become a stockbroker.

In the late forties, while Kay Kyser was barnstorming the state to promote the need for UNC's medical school, the journalism faculty brought me and hundreds of other high school newspaper editors to campus for a summer institute. I went into every building that was not locked. You could walk in the front door of South Building and straight out the back without anybody asking what you wanted, and then you could rush through again. The Old Well water had a special taste. I climbed to the domed reference room in Wilson Library and just sat there, waiting for knowledge to seep into me by osmosis.

But my family couldn't afford to relocate in Chapel Hill even if I burned up, and with the help of an escheats scholarship and my mother's savings, I entered Woman's College the year Uncle Mot's planetarium opened here while Charlie Justice was still whizzing down-field in his #22 jersey. I did not really reach UNC until well after the big influx of veterans, not until 1954, when my husband entered law school and I—hugely pregnant—was understandably excused from P.E. and still allowed to take classes with Rupert Vance and Hugh Holman. A few years earlier, the first African-American students had been admitted. We arrived in time for Hurricane Hazel to shoot a tree limb through our pasteboard house in Victory Village—$35 a month, with furniture; but it must have been a good address since at various times that neighborhood was home to Bill and Ida Friday, Bill and Grace Aycock, Terry and Margaret Rose Sanford.

Last month I met with the reunion class of 1958—and discovered that many of my contemporaries had gotten so gray, wrinkled, bald, and fat that they didn't recognize me. We reminisced about those good old days when the air was clean and sex was dirty, when there was still diagonal parking on Franklin Street; we recalled parties at Hogan's lake, Danziger's. We were here when Channel 4 went on the air, when Mr. Friday became president. I worked for the *Chapel Hill Weekly* and, on Sundays, Louis and Mim Graves would have Lowry and me over for bourbon during church hour; we, being married, could have a drink, but undergraduate Charles Dunn was never served a thing stronger than Coca-Cola.

For eight years after graduation, Lowry practiced law and our family lived thirty-five miles south, off-campus in Sanford, and I wrote and published some fiction. When Jessie Rehder and Max Steele gave me the chance in 1966 to teach here part-time, I outran Br'er Rabbit into the briar patch.

Now I've taught here longer than Skipper Coffin did. I've probably become one of those self-willed professors Gordon Gray once complained about. A dry, somewhat unacademic man, Gray said that being Secretary of the Army and President of the University were similar: the main difference was that the faculty had no individuals below the rank of general.

By now you're wondering why I'm digging up so much of the past. You must feel a bit like a child who was helping Grandpa dig potatoes, and who finally asked wearily, "Grandpa, what made you bury these things anyway?"

But I'm not the only one who'd like to unearth Carolina's tradition, so we

can extend it and exceed it. Recently our own undergraduates, led by senior class president Franklin Golden of Charlotte, have spearheaded an actual university course in the history of this place. Today's students may have seen "The Lost Colony," but they've forgotten it goes back to Paul Green in 1937. When they climb over these rock walls, they'd actually like to remember that these go back to the time of Elisha Mitchell, that during the Speaker Ban Law a real, live communist spoke across the rocks into McCorkle Place, and that none of these walls have ever turned into that fence a certain senator said should be built around the UNC insane asylum! And although couples strolling through the arboretum may not care right then to remember that W. C. Coker started it at the turn of the century, they are this year seeing the wisteria trellis reconstructed, under which someday their future children may also walk hand-in-hand.

What I wish for today's students and their future children is that they, too, may fall in love with this university—a love serious enough to support and enlarge it, a love deep enough to survive the predictable lovers' quarrels. Because sometimes the Tar Heel public does quarrel with its university, and today there are fifteen others in the system, plus numerous private and community colleges from Kitty Hawk to Bat Cave. Sometimes our state catches anti-intellectualism like a flu epidemic; books get published like *Blood on the Old Well*; some professor will be said, like Socrates, to corrupt the young. There will be springtimes like 1974 when nine hundred students went streaking naked on Franklin Street, winters when party boys stole Christmas decorations, or even a dark season when one schizophrenic student shot the innocent on a Chapel Hill street. We'll protest Vietnam, promote civil rights, maybe Carolina will even do something seriously unpopular—like canceling the Dixie Classic as Bill Aycock did. The barber shops and editorial pages will have a lot to say about twenty-four-hour visitation, or marijuana, or the Black Cultural Center. If it's not HEW telling the university what to do, it'll be the DAR, the UDC, the KKK, or the NRA.

But the real product of the university, that invisible outcome that so amazed my father when he could see neither assembly line nor final result, will persist. Alice Palmer defined it best when she was president of Wellesley; she said, "It is people that count—you put yourself in people, they touch other people; these, others still, and so you go on working forever."

Her words not only convey my goal of three decades of teaching at Carolina, but they pull together my own twin careers of teaching and writing while being nurtured in this very special place. On the page and in the story, as well as in the classroom, "it is people that count."

By touching the lives of thousands, who then have affected other lives, the university has done its work for over two hundred years, and I've been one of its fortunate workers for the past thirty-two. May the results of all these semesters, of all these classes and dissertations and research and exams, add up to that invisible, amazing product my father sensed in the 1930s, and may it go on working. Forever.

PART II

Tributes to Doris Betts

Including Proceedings of a Banquet on the Occasion of Her Acceptance of the North Caroliniana Society for 1998 Carolina Inn, Chapel Hill, 12 June 1998

Opening Remarks and Introductions

H. G. Jones

Twenty years ago, just up the hall in what was then the UNC Ballroom, Paul Green accepted the first North Caroliniana Society Award. Now, that was before the advent of the ubiquitous feel-good awards so common today, and the 17th of March was still nominally St. Patrick's Day. But in 1978 we proclaimed it St. Paul's Day, the playwright's 84th birthday. That was a magical evening, as many in this audience remember. Now, on the twentieth anniversary of the award, we will share another magical evening, for our 1998 recipient's career and contributions bear a remarkable resemblance to those of Paul Green in so many ways. Perhaps the most identifiable difference is suggested in a headline on an Associated Press story in 1992: "[Doris] Betts saw only male writers but decided to write anyway." Doris Betts needed no organization to help liberate her; she has always done things her own way, and we all are richer because of her originality of thought, word, deed, and action.

As we prepare for dinner, may I recognize those at the head table. Will each stand and remain standing, and will the audience withhold applause until all have been presented. From my left, President Whichard's wife Leona, Lewellyn Betts's husband Tom Mroz, long-time friend Liz Evans; and from my right, daughter Lewellyn Betts, President Willis Whichard; and now will you welcome Judge Lowry Betts and Doris Betts. [Applause.] Son Erskine and his family are in Texas on a long-planned vacation, and son David had an emergency assignment in Raleigh but hopes to join us before the evening is over.

On your program you will find a list of previous recipients of the North Caroliniana Society Award, and I want to ask each of those present to stand and remain standing until all have been presented (and again, please withhold your applause until all have been presented). I am going to ask the widows and spouses to stand also as their names are called, for none of our recipients earned the award alone. First is Albert Coates's Gladys. I should remind you that Gladys passed another birthday recently, and now we have only four years to await 19 May 2002, when there'll be the biggest party Chapel Hill has ever known. Then in chronolog-

ical order, Bill and Ida Friday, Bill Powell and Virginia, Burke Davis and Judy, Lawrence London and Dewey, Frank Kenan's Betty, Archie Davis's Mary Louise, Lyle Sitterson's Nancy, and John Sanders and Ann. [Applause.] Mary and Jim Semans had planned to be here until one member of that large family suddenly decided to get married, so they sent flowers and regrets; and Bill Cochrane had an unpleasant appointment today at the Naval Hospital in Washington.

Not so coincidentally, at this very moment tens of thousands of fellow North Carolinians are watching Doris Betts: You see, this afternoon Bill Friday interviewed her for his North Carolina People program on Public Television, and so by the magic of video, other Tar Heels are also enjoying her wit and wisdom while you enjoy her physical presence.

Please enjoy your dinner and table mates.

[Following Dinner:]

During these last twenty years, we have tried to maintain the tone and spirit that pervaded that magical evening with Paul Green when, to his absolute shock, Elizabeth Green rose as the surprise speaker. Most of you have read that touching essay, "The Paul Green I Know." Because the North Caroliniana Society seeks not publicity but quiet recognition for those who serve our state, we have never sought big-name speakers, preferring instead to allow our recipients to spend an evening with family and friends, the people who know them in all of their humanity. And so it will be tonight. As usual, we will in the fall publish in our *Imprints* series both Doris's marvelous afternoon address and the entire proceedings of the evening, and you will receive a copy. Incidentally, Neil Fulghum has installed a small exhibit on Doris in the North Carolina Collection Reading Room in Wilson Library. Drop by to see it.

The only reason that it has taken us two decades to recognize Doris is because each year other organizations were honoring her, and we didn't want to appear to be copying their idea. Finally this year the Board of Directors realized that the time will never come when Doris is overlooked by others, and so here we are tonight. It is not just the literary Doris Betts that we so admire and appreciate; it is the whole woman who brightens our spirits each time we see her—indeed, each time her name is mentioned.

—One who knew hard work from childhood, who helped put her husband through law school, who reported for newspapers and did menial jobs while keeping house and raising a family and honing her writing skills, and who still lovingly cares for her eighty-six-year-old mother;

—Whose commitment to the fledgling North Carolina Writers Conference more than forty years ago led her to climb aboard a garbage truck in a frantic (and, happily, successful) effort to retrieve the checks, cash, and mailing list that an all-too-efficient janitor at Glen Lennox had assumed to be trash;

—Who lets academic fads and pressure for conformity roll off her back like

rain on a duck;

—Who, when told that it might offend certain students to have their grammar corrected, said "There is an English language and I believe every North Carolinian ought to be taught to read, write, and speak it";

—Who paid no attention to professsors who criticized her appearance on the platform with an evangelist, the most famous North Carolinian of our era;

—Who, grieving when not UNC but a sister institution launched the splendid *North Carolina Literary Review,* atoned for the local neglect by organizing the Second Sunday Readings series, funded by the North Caroliniana Society, that continues to bring scores of outstanding North Carolina authors to this campus to be seen and heard not only by the Creative Writing classes but by us, the general public. (That was a rather novel idea back then; now just look at the schedule of readings in the local newspapers.)

—Who instinctively responded with a stinging rebuke to a local newspaper that unjustifiably criticized her judicial husband;

—Who, as the first woman to serve as Chairman of the Faculty, toned down the rhetoric that had previously lost friends and influenced the wrong people in the General Assembly, thus helping restore the credibility of the University in the eyes of its owners, the taxpayers;

—Who devotes more time than anyone from this campus off the campus speaking before any group, large or small, and considers it not an imposition but an obligation of a public servant. (I don't have her schedule for this week, but I read in the paper that on Tuesday at 2:00 she spoke at Carolina Meadows and at 7:30 that evening was holding forth at a Raleigh bookstore; and tonight she must go home and prepare to serve as master of ceremonies tomorrow at "A Fancy for Literature" at White Cross, then rush to Asheville for a reading Sunday afternoon.)

How does she do it all?

There is no way for us to encapsulate Doris Betts tonight, or, for that matter, ever. However, three people who know her well will at least give us glimpses into the life of this remarkable colleague.

Professor Elizabeth Evans, a native of Statesville, received her doctorate in English from UNC-CH and for twenty-six years taught in the Department of English at Georgia Tech, retiring as department head in 1990. She now lives in Jackson County, North Carolina, still teaching from time to time at Western Carolina University while continuing her writing on literary figures. Her publications have included biographical studies of Ring Lardner, Thomas Wolfe, Eudora Welty, and Anne Tyler. Her latest book in the Twayne U.S. Authors series is titled simply *Doris Betts.* It contains, in Doris's words, "more facts about me than I care to remember." Run to the Intimate or the Bullshead tomorrow to get your copy. A friend of Doris Betts's since childhood, and her literary colleague over the years, Liz Evans.

[Elizabeth Evans's address begins on page 19.]

For reasons that will become obvious, we are switching the order of the next two speakers.

I got to know Lewellyn Betts over a "Single Gambler" at the Rathskeller, and each time I tried to turn the conversation to her, she would turn it into another direction. I told her if she didn't give me a little more autobiographical information I was going to spread the tale that Doris and Lowry found her out in the horse pen one morning. She responded that when she was born, her parents couldn't afford a cow, much less a horse. A last-minute e-mail evoked from her this lengthy autobiography: "I am no writer. I have at various times in my life worked in theater, video, and artificial intelligence. . . . I am currently the Project Manager of a 22.5 million dollar research project at the Carolina Population Center and am a hobby potter." With $22.5 million dollars to spend and characteristics as diverse as artificial intelligence and potting, Lewellyn should be an ideal character for one of her mother's future novels. Lowry and Doris's only daughter, Lewellyn.

[Lewellyn Betts's address begins on page 23.]

When we discussed possible speakers, Doris wanted one special friend to participate. She said, however, that while he was a great teacher, he refused to speak in public. She added, "He might do it if you ask him and not I," and the challenge was on. No, he responded, he had made only one speech in his life and that was a disaster. Both Doris and I knew that nothing he had ever done was a disaster, and, thanks to the effrontery of e-mail, I kept up the pressure even after he confided that, to have a proper excuse for not being here tonight, he was planning a trip to Toronto or London or *somewhere* this very day. More e-mails begged him to reconsider—even if only in the form of a letter that we might read on this occasion. That did the trick, and tonight we have a surprise for Doris, a portion of which she will hear read aloud by another great friend and admirer. President Bill Friday, will you come forward and read Doris's mail?

[President Friday read Max Steele's literary valentine, which beings on page 27.]

A Lucky Friendship

Elizabeth Evans

Doris Betts's contributions to the literary and cultural life of North Carolina are legion. One endeavor in particular has touched the lives of many people who are not directly associated with the University because Doris has been the guest speaker at public libraries from Murphy to Manteo.

Not long after *Souls Raised from the Dead* was published, Doris was scheduled to speak at Western Carolina University, an invitation that quickly spawned an additional request: would she also speak at our Jackson County Public Library. Ever generous, Doris agreed. A slight problem emerged because the library talk was decided upon after our weekly newspaper had appeared on Thursday, so getting out publicity was hampered. I suggested to Kay Byer—our resident poet who was in charge—that given the subject matter of *Souls Raised from the Dead*, surely many people in our local church congregations would be interested in coming. Kay agreed and we divided up the churches and headed for the telephone.

My list began with a Presbyterian church whose minister answered when I made the call. I identified myself, gave him the pertinent information, and emphasized the interest people in his congregation would have, particularly in the spiritual aspects of Betts's novel entitled *Souls Raised from the Dead.*

There was a slight pause, and then he asked, "Which side is she on?"

"Oh," I said, "she's all for it."

I can't remember when I didn't know Doris Betts, and many memories revolve around our home territory of Iredell County and Statesville where we and our people were, as we say in the South, born and raised. We grew up on the cusp of the Great Depression which touched our parents' lives sufficiently and made us wary of too high living and any waste. We both knew enough about the farm to raise our eyebrows years later when a *Washington Post* article referred to eggs that were fresh because they "had just been hatched."

Our elementary school years were punctuated with ever-present reminders

of World War II ration books, victory gardens, and U.S. Savings Bond Drives. There were small flags in the windows of many houses and too often a gold star replaced the living blue one. In this undercurrent of anxiety, movies like *Mrs. Miniver* starring Greer Garson and Walter Pigeon gave us hope that if we were just strong enough for long enough, Dunkirk and the whole war would, one day, be over.

When Doris graduated from Statesville Senior High School she was named by her prophetic classmates as the "Most Talented" member of that class; four years later she would publish *The Gentle Insurrection and Other Stories* which won the UNC-Putnam Booklength Manuscript Prize. Our home territory has supplied some detail in Doris's fiction. The Catawba River that winds through Iredell County becomes the Katsewa River that winds its way through her first novel, *Tall Houses in Winter*, and her third, *The River to Pickle Beach*. Two houses on Front Street in Statesville, houses with many rooms and one with an intriguing fish pond, figure in an autobiographical story entitled "All That Glisters Isn't Gold." At the corner of South Meeting and Walnut streets in Statesville, an undistinguished municipal parking lot has replaced the corner's former occupant—the Wallace Brothers Herbarium, built in 1870, and at that time was reputed to be the largest herbarium in the world. By the 1940s that establishment had long passed its prime and the building—windows shattered and sides sagging—had graffiti on the sides just mysterious enough to intrigue two preadolescent girls in Doris's story "The Spies in the Herb House," a story in which, as Michael McFee has noted so well, Betts tells "the oldest, most profound story there is: the story of a fall from innocence to experience, of a passage from a small safe world into a large dangerous one."

Statesville today has changed since Doris and I grew up there. Enterprising folk—many of them newcomers—have restored several downtown buildings to their original 1920s texture, and Walnut Street, always a beauty, is now even more so and the tall houses there—those in *Tall Houses in Winter*—are more elegant than ever. The town square is still there and the town clock still runs. But the familiar businesses of our early days—Purcell's Drug Store and Robinson's Barber Shop—are long gone, some replaced with the chain names that homogenize the American landscape.

We shared, too, an upbringing in the Associate Reformed Presbyterian church—whose members are generally referred to as ARP's, or as Doris's mother prefers, "All Right People"—a denomination that was, in our day, sensibly conservative; today the denomination appears depressingly conservative. To recall some familiar names in that long ago congregation brings back countless Sunday sermons and church picnics and week-long revival meetings when we shared the pews or the choir loft with the Stikeleathers and the Ramseys, the Presslys and the Kimmonses, the Axleys and the Deatons, the Wallaces and the Bradfords, the Robinsons and the Freezes, the Waughs and the Evanses.

When we were growing up, our church did not sing hymns since their lyrics were composed by mere men; we, instead, sang only from the Psalter whose lyrics,

of course, came from King David himself. That black-backed Psalter put into our ears and into our imaginations wonderful images and ambiguities as stringy tenor and wavery soprano and hopeful bass voices sang that poetry Sunday after Sunday.

I can still remember that #88 in the Psalter (a setting of Psalm 42) began with these two lines:

"As pants the hart for water's brooks,
So pants my soul, O Lord, for thee."

I dare say that Doris from an early age discerned in these two lines the successful striking of a simile, yoking the literal *hart* with the mysterious *soul*. And I'm sure she did not confuse the HART in the line with its homophone HEART, whereas I endured a stressful time worrying about the body's most vital organ as it struggled and struggled, gasping for the reprieve of water. I must have been at least ten years old before it dawned on me that the line—"As pants the hart for water's brooks"—was about a thirsty deer hunting a creek in the woods. It took longer for the theological point to sink in.

But we sang these psalms—many of them set to exquisite melodies—twice on Sunday, on Wednesday night, and for a glorious week every summer in the Blue Ridge mountains of North Carolina, where the denomination maintains its summer conference grounds—a place called BonClarken located on highway 25 just across the road from the Carl Sandburg house and farm.

That early church experience over the years made its way into Doris's fiction where Biblical allusions do not merely reflect a commonly held tradition, but are instead portents of theological issues. These issues go deep in Betts's fiction and fortunate are her readers who readily know the New Testament parables, who recognize the Old Testament stories of kings and shepherds, who find the psalmist's lines as familiar as family names, who were raised ARP's.

[I am always delighted when my computer spell-check highlights the singular possessive *Betts's* and asks—as if it too recognized the import of Doris's intent—if I didn't really mean to type *baptizes*.]

You here in Chapel Hill have a special claim since you have enjoyed Doris's presence as colleague for many years, witnessing her distinguished career as administrator, as teacher, as advisor, as member or chair of endless committees, as Chair of the Faculty, as lecturer on campus and across the nation. And all of you assembled here admire her many accomplishments, take pride in the honors that she has brought to the University and to the State.

Her hometown shares this pride—and so do I. I remember exactly where I was in 1954 when I bought a copy of *The Gentle Insurrection and Other Stories*. I remember one summer's day in 1965 walking down Franklin Street reading a just-published copy of *The Astronomer and Other Stories* and magically crossing every side street without taking my eyes off the page. I remember when the Southern Humanities Conference met in 1977 at Wake Forest, Doris read her brilliant story "This Is the Only Time I'll Tell It," a reading that so moved the audience that the moderator briefly adjourned the session so that people could collect themselves.

I remember vividly every piece of fiction Doris has ever published because her fiction does what Flannery O'Connor said good fiction should do: It hangs on in the mind and keeps on meaning.

In the 1997 off-Broadway musical "Violet"—based on Doris's story "The Ugliest Pilgrim—the show-stopper, a wonderful and rousing song about the game of poker *and* life, is called "The Luck of the Draw." My pleasure in Doris's friendship and my pleasure in reading and writing about her fiction have been for me a genuine "luck of the draw."

My Mother, Doris Betts

Lewellyn Betts

As the children of Doris Betts, my brothers, David and Erskine, and I, have for all of our conscious lives been responding to what we call "that question." And by that I mean that sooner or later nearly everyone that we meet gets around to asking, very casually, of course, "So, tell me, are you by any chance related to Doris Betts?" And then after we say "Yes," they follow up with, "What's it like to be the child of a writer?" All of our lives we've been asked this two-part question. From our grade school teachers to college professors, parents of childhood friends, neighbors, cashiers in grocery stores whose names I do not know—everyone is curious. "What's it like to be the child of a writer?"

One might think that at least one result of this regular display of curiosity would be that I would be well-prepared to deliver this speech this evening, even eager to deliver it so that we could finally put the matter to rest. After all, there are more than 200 people here tonight, so it is certainly a perfect opportunity to provide the definitive answer. But, when the so very persuasive H. G. Jones contacted me, I was, in fact, not ready at all. For one thing I am not an experienced public speaker and I am certainly no writer. And, more the point, it is a fact that I have dodged the question every single time it has been posed to me. I have usually given some off-hand, flippant response and let it go at that. And while I certainly cannot answer that question in a substantive way tonight, I can and will share a few memories and thoughts in the hope that maybe this will give you at least some sense of what it was like.

To start off, one thing that I can tell you is that we Betts kids have always known that we were very, very lucky; when we were growing up, we were always aware that we had a special thing going with this particular mother. And furthermore, the complete and God's-honest truth is that it really did seem to us that our family life was somehow more exotic and interesting than the lives of those poor and unfortunate families around us who did not have a writer among

them. As adults, we now know, of course, that the fullness of our lives was because of the person that she was, and is, and not due to her profession. And she is, of course, still quite exotic.

Doris Betts's great-great-grandmother was a black-haired little Irish girl who was abandoned at eighteen months of age during one of Ireland's potato famines. With only a note in her clothing identifying her as being named Mary Katherine Morrow, she was left on board a ship carrying passengers that were emigrating to the United States. A shipboard family named McMurray adopted her, and eventually they settled in Iredell County, North Carolina, a Scotch-Irish farming community. A century and a half later, Mary Katherine's great-great-granddaughter, Doris Waugh, was born.

Flash forward twenty-one years, and I was born. My own earliest sense of my mother is surprisingly consistent with the picture that I have of her today: a lively and free-spirited pony-tailed presence. I have always thought of her as being fearless and ready for anything. She is a risk-taker in word and in action. She is one of those writers driven to directly experience events and not just live them vicariously. She certainly had a zeal for adventure and learning that I never observed in other Sanford moms. In addition to being a writer, teacher, wife, and mother to three children, some of the "secondary" pursuits of her life have included newspaper woman, school board member, stone carver, quilter, weaver, rose enthusiast, bird-watcher, calligrapher, beekeeper, and horsewoman. She did not know how to drive a car until she was twenty-eight years old. Two years later she was zooming around on a red Honda motorcycle. The other Sanford moms would drive by in their Buicks with their mouths hanging open.

My mother loves to travel, although she nearly died in one of her adventures when the twin-engine plane in which she was a passenger encountered a turbulent snowstorm over the Alaskan wilderness and nearly crashed into a mountainside. She was delighted, even invigorated to experience this peril. It was a grand experience, she said, not to be missed.

Doris Betts has never learned to swim and to this day she remains terrified of deep water. And yet in spite of this, when she was forty years old she and my dad took a daring two-week raft trip down the rapids of the Colorado River. Had she fallen overboard, she could not have saved herself. But for her, the experience of the crashing water and the view of the canyon wildlife from a bouncing raft in the middle of the river was well worth the risk of drowning. The next year, she and my father and brothers went back to the Grand Canyon on a hiking trip. We nearly lost her again, this time when she got heatstroke and had to be airlifted out of the canyon by helicopter. And about that beekeeping that I mentioned earlier: She finally gave up that hobby after the second time she was rushed to the hospital in anaphylactic shock. It seems that she'd forgotten to mention to my father that she was allergic to bees.

One of many happy consequences of being a child of a writer was that we never had plain ordinary birds and trees in our back yard. Unlike the neighbors,

our yard was always teeming with color and excitement. From earliest childhood, the naming of things has been our mother's grand pursuit. And she made sure that we, too, observed the yellow-crested Cedar Waxwings and white-breasted Nuthatches that were flying about. In our yard, we had Red Spider lilies, willow oak trees, and pesky Blue Jays. Instead of plain yellow flowers, we had King Alfred daffodils. In my mother's world, nothing in nature ever suffers the indignity of remaining unnamed. And I have to admit that in speaking out loud the names of some of the flora in our back yard, I get a feel for the wisdom in that determination. Just saying their names gives them life in my mind. Mother also used her passion for language to have fun with her children, as well as to educate. When she read stories to us—which was several times a day—she acted out all of the characters and made her voice go all spooky during the scary parts. She still does this with her grandchildren. Other times, she would just plain make things up. And those were the best stories, of course. We lucky Betts kids were the only children in the entire neighborhood who had the full scoop on the castle where Tinkerbelle really lived and exactly what the Tooth Fairy did with those teeth when she had the day off.

Her obsession with naming extends to pets. The names of the first two dogs of our childhood are a good example. When I was around three and a half years old, our family was living near the Glen Lennox Shopping Center here in Chapel Hill. Late one rainy night, some irresponsible person in a pickup truck tossed a sack full of puppies into the creek by our house. While David and I were sleeping, my dad went out and rescued the five drowning puppies from the raging creek. We were thrilled to wake up the next morning to find a kitchen full of puppies. We, of course, fell in love and wanted to keep them all. I also remember this particular morning as being the occasion of our very first Bible story. Using the circumstances of the puppy rescue as a starting point, our mother told us the tale of a courageous Israelite woman and how she saved her sons' lives by floating them down river in a reed basket made of bullrushes. In the end, David and I were allowed to keep two of the puppies. Naturally, Mother named them Aaron and Moses. Those symbolic names not only signaled the onset of our religious education and ensured that the memory of my first puppy would never die; these names also served to impart some small sense of dignity to a pair of otherwise very homely hound dogs.

I suppose it goes without saying that each and every room and hallway in our house had at least one set of bookshelves, often more, and that these shelves were always in overflow status. That habit continues to this day, in spite of the fact that she regularly moves books out by the trunk load, donating them to the local library or maybe a second-hand store. This life-long love affair with words and books and stories also has its quirky, eccentric side. For not only does she adore words; she is also quite passionate about the accessories to words, the accoutrements to language. I am talking about office supplies! Doris Betts goes crazy for office supplies; she's mad about them, and a fairly good-sized chunk of her salary

goes towards feeding this hunger. Every single one of those overflowing bookshelves has a corner set aside for the latest rage in multicolored post-it notes, glitter pens, and calligraphy ink. And as you might imagine, she has a weakness for all writing implements, ink pens in particular, and she is quite reluctant to throw them away when they run dry. Usually she just sticks them back in the pencil jar; after all, they have served her well.

I, for one, will be forever grateful for her imparting her love of reading to me. I know that Mother must have been the person who taught me to read, although I have no memory of the learning experience. I have no idea how she did this, because to me reading is simply something I've always known how to do. I do remember being quite baffled by those first-grade "Dick and Jane" books—so bewildered, in fact, that I have this vague impression that the teacher might have implied to my mother that I had a reading disability of some kind. This was a matter of some concern, as you might imagine, since Mother knew that in fact I could read quite well. In an effort to find out what was wrong, she had me read out loud to her from one of the school readers, and from that reading, she quickly deduced the cause of the problem. As many of you may remember, in those days the editors of early textbooks substituted pictures for the "difficult" words in the text, and I simply didn't know how to read the pictures; I'd never been taught that. My teacher, my mother, had gone straight to words. Anyway, when Jane was supposed to throw a ball to Spot, I often guessed wrong, and had her pitch a ripe orange instead. Once Mother figured out what was wrong, the solution for this natural teacher was easy: She went through each and every one of my schoolbooks for the year and painstakingly hand-wrote the appropriate word underneath each of those pictures. I've been reading non-stop ever since. And she's always guided me wisely in my choices. Many afternoons, I'd come home from school and there would be a pile of new books on my bed. On weekends, while some families were watching football on television, ours would take field trips to the Intimate Book Shop in Chapel Hill or maybe to the Sanford Public Library, just to stock up on books. When that local public library decided to remove the entire Nancy Drew collection from its shelves because some higher-up deemed them too frivolous, Mother wrote a scathing letter to the editor of the local newspaper and got Nancy reinstated pronto. A year of so later, she saw to it that I read *To Kill a Mockingbird* at exactly the right age and time in my life—I was the same age as Scout. Even now, whenever she comes to visit, Mother does not come empty-handed. She always brings a grocery bag stuffed with novels and magazines.

My childhood memories of her are certainly not the conventional pictures of contented motherhood. For example, I do not have a single memory of Doris Betts wearing an apron. She was certainly no Harriet Nelson taking her cues from a Pillsbury commercial. I cannot call to mind one single image of her smiling and being perky in the kitchen as she baked chocolate cookies for the family. As a matter of fact the only low grade that Doris Betts ever received in her entire scholastic life was in the home economics class that she was required to take; she

earned a "D" in that class at Statesville Senior High school. I know that it's okay for me to mention her poor showing in home ec tonight because she has always been rather proud of that "D" and extremely relieved that her talents lay elsewhere. And other than home ec, I hasten to add, she was a straight "A" student.

Instead of in a kitchen, I will always see my mother hunched over a clunky black manual typewriter, her fingers flying across that keyboard, or maybe she is perched in a brown chair in our living room, with her legs curled up underneath. In either case, I see her surrounded by dog-eared spiral notebooks, pieces of scrap paper, and yellow legal pads, every single page full of stories and notes. If she is in the chair, one of those notebooks is on her lap and she has been writing longhand, her method of choice. She holds a blue fountain pen in her right hand, a lighted Kent cigarette in the other, and there are a backup pen and cigarette holder stuck behind her ears. The only movements in the room are the ashes dropping from her cigarette onto the floor. She's very still for a long while, frowning and staring off into some faraway place, trying to make a connection with the muse, I guess.

There is so much more to be said, but I will end with one last comment. I am convinced that very few of us can honestly say that we have ended up in the profession best suited to our talents and spirit, or that we are living exactly the right lifestyle fitting our needs and habits. My mother is the rare exception. She could never have been anyone other than who she is, a writer and teacher. I have never met anyone else quite like her. She would probably insist that her particular spark is nothing special, but I have learned that the opposite is true. She is indeed unique, and yet I see flickers of her personality in every good person that I meet. Doris Betts is an original light, and a giver of light; her wisdom and humanity have transformed lives, beginning with those of my brothers and me.

A Litany for Doris Betts

Max Steele

Dear Doris:

It all began so simply, our careers in 1966. Both of us brought to campus by that wonderful woman, Jessie Rehder, with her classical Peck and Peck bird-nest hat which she used upside-down as an ash tray. You as a part-time, one-time instructor. Me as a one-year Writer-in-Residence. Then suddenly she is dead and all we have is a stack of student papers from her bedside, corrected and graded, her last duty done, with the note secured by a red rubber-band, that says in her blunt way: "I do not want to die."

Once, after a bad quarrel with her beloved savior, Anne Sullivan Macy, Helen Keller left a note on her good mentor's desk: a note, a definition. "*Teacher, and yet again, Teacher/and that is all/and it will be my answer when Death calls.*"

So I take over the creative writing program with the promise from Carroll Hollis that you will be hired full-time. What a boon for the University, aye, for the State that decision has been. Mainly for the hundreds, even thousands, who have sat in your classes. The oldest are now 55. More important, the youngest are 18. Which means that with average life spans they will be quoting you in the year 2060. No, you must not let that depress you. Half of them will, as on exams, quote the exact opposite of what you really said. So little Southern boys and girls will be erroneously hearing that short stories should begin with a character waking up and should end in suicide and that women characters should be in a room alone, remembering when. Or out clinging to run-away horses while nuns rush out to save them. Yes, you will be misquoted. But will people be reading anyway? At least they will have sat in your class. Or stood the first few days waiting for a lazy registered student to drop the class.

We love those who help us grow: parents, coaches, teachers.
Do not let them make an icon out of you.

What will save us is not icons but teachers. You had your good mentors:

Jessie Rehder, Hugh Holman, and Fanny Grey Patton. And I at UNC: H. K. Russell and Sam Selden. Lineage is important in a university. Continuity.

Oprah Cummings, for instance, who guards the chairman's meager funds. When we wanted to mail a letter we have to go down the three flights of stairs in Murphy and over to Bingham to get a stamp from her.

We begin then with three courses in fiction. One in poetry. And the years pass until we have fourteen courses a semester and eleven full- and part-time teachers. Now when you say "we" you include Daphne. Now when I say "we" I include Daphne. We are the backbone. Certainly there are others: Marianne Gingher, Kirkpatrick, Seay, Bland, Carolyn Kizer, Lee Smith, Harmon, even Betty Smith and the great Bill Blackburn. (And even Louis Rubin who after his great success with young writers at Algonquin is generously teaching without pay an honors seminar once a week. But it is not quite successful in that many of our best writers graduate without taking the course.) At least twenty teachers over the thirty years. Most of them teaching only one section while you, Daphne, and I teach two and three. Always you are in on every decision about teaching and teachers.

Years go by. Students from our program are doing well in graduate programs across the country.

Your students come to us beautifully prepared. They know what a story is, how to write dialogue, how to line-edit and cut, how, most important, to read. Maybe you are teaching self-discipline without knowing that that is your prime subject matter. You stop cold-turkey from two pack of cigarettes a day and claim for six months there is not a second when you are not desperate for another. At night you dream you're chain-smoking and wake up two or three times dreaming you have set the bed on fire. You continue to teach your students with exquisite consideration while at any second you may bite your fountain pen in two.

To women you teach a more subtle lesson: a woman can have everything and be successful in all areas: mother, wife, writer, teacher, administrator, colleague, friend. Perhaps that is a dangerous lesson. Society has not progressed fast enough. A promise too early is a big cause of prison riots.

We love those who help us grow: parents, coaches, teachers.

Now Jessie Rehder's students are being published and are famous. Russell Banks and Lawrence Naumoff in the classes we inherited from Jessie Rehder are gaining attention. Soon come the national campus problems of Viet Nam War protestors. General madness on the campuses. Our students are not breaking plate-glass windows or burning buildings. The revolt here is gentler. One student hangs a placard on Davie Poplar that says "Davie Poplar is an oak." There is a darker element too.

The corridor near your office door is crowded with students. You counsel now as much as teach. Is there such a thing as professor-client privilege in the alarming things they tell us about dope, about shocking affairs? Your Presbyterian training guides you. You guide us.

A graduate student wakes being stabbed with an ice pick. She has been

editor of the *Quarterly*, a good student, but after weeks in hospital, she leaves town in fear of her life.

Do you remember late one afternoon, the offices are shutting down and you walk by my office and a huge dirty-blond guy who says he wants in the program? He is over thirty and not a student and is sitting between me and the door asking insinuating questions in a sneering voice. I do not know if you hear and I do not want to involve you because I sense danger in him. You pause at the door and leave the building. Thirty minutes later I still have not figured how to get past him to the door. His silences are malignant. For the rest of my life I will know the odor of evil is the rubbery smell of bare feet in dirty sneakers. I have no doubt that when he stares at the floor and grins he is seeing there my blood. Finally, he mentions beer, and I say, "I'll buy you one" and walk him to the Carolina Coffee Shop. There at the door is where the bus stops that will take me home. I buy him a pitcher of beer, and he has just drained his first glass when a bus arrives. I run out and get on. The phone is ringing when I open the door to my house. It is you saying, "Thank God. When you didn't answer in your office or here, I put my pistol in my glove compartment and was just coming to get you." Later, reluctantly, you tell me you have good reason to believe he was a suspect in the early dawn stabbing of the graduate student.

Yes, one can teach writing. And one can teach courage, and the meaning of friendship.

Do not let them make an icon of you.

Now ten years have passed and of course the administration has discovered you and you are on every university committee, first as the token woman, for there are few to go around in these days, and then as an influential voice and finally as a wise force. Later you are Chairman of the Faculty. Years later when I ask you what is the honor that has meant most to you, you say "The Tanner Award for Excellence in Teaching." And when I ask why, you say "Because it was voted to me by the students."

We have perhaps the best undergraduate program in the country. Our former students are being published. Thirty books, forty, fifty. Over a dozen publish writers. Many by Rubin at Algonquin.

Teacher, and yet again, Teacher,/ and that is all. . . .

The hall around your office door remains crowded with students, sitting on the floor, waiting to be next. What are you telling them that is so urgent? Surely more than the rest of us are teaching. I know you teach grammar as the essential. But what else? Now when I need to talk to you I have to go back to my office and phone your office. They follow you to your car as they had Jessie Rehder and no other. You know the answer they need: self-knowledge is the goal of a liberal arts education.

We love those who help us grow: parents, coaches, teachers.

Over the years you have grown enormously too. So do you love those who have taught you? The deans, the provosts, the presidents who have so overworked

you? Your commencement speech about your own education is classic, with that flippant Doris line: "We have seen TV grow from infancy to adultery." Your overwork has aged you but not the sparkle. How can you teach as diligently as ever with all the work they have loaded on you? You have learned much but never to say "no" to a burden or request. I watch you cross the campus loaded down with a stack of work an ambitious dean has given you to be returned overnight.

The words come to mind: "*I have done the State some service and they know it well.*"

How can you have so many burdens in South Building, in Greenlaw, on your horse-farm, and still write so many books and so many notes on so many manuscripts in that clear, tiny handwriting? What a splendid textbook on fiction writing your corrections would make if collected!

You are all day all over campus, eating crackers for lunch, running between meetings and class. So now when I need answers I have to phone you at home. Over the years I have heard: "Max, can I call you back? I'm about to lose a mare and her unborn colt and my hands are bloody." "Max, his brother has fallen on the steps and I think he's broken both arms." "Max, I've just been up to the highway and seen where my son went through the back window of the pick-up. I am still being sick to my stomach and have got to shower." "Max, I'll call you tomorrow. She's turned the refrigerator over. There's mayonnaise and broken glass all over the linoleum and she's barefooted." It is no wonder that you refer literature back to life and life back to literature and not as the decadent academics do: literature back to theory and theory back to literature. With life left out.

No, they must not make an icon out of you. The world needs a Renaissance woman with real flesh and blood and bones and, above all, guts.

I do not like to think of all those women who believe it is easy or even possible to be like you. Some day there will be a Depression known as The Doris Betts Syndrome. Women on Prozac, Women on booze, Women on dope. Maybe even Women on bullets, because you have made it look easy and obtainable. What an impossible model to copy! Yet I agree: The day will come for their fulfillments.

Now we are getting one or two books a year from former students. I count over seventy, including those published by Rubin at Algonquin. Our undergraduate program is recognized as the best in the states. It is secure. But I am burning out as a reader and thus as a teacher. It makes me physically sick to pick up a stack of manuscripts. I can no longer respond emotionally to words on a page. Out of fairness to students I will seek early retirement. How, how do you go on with such enthusiasm, such bright-eyed brilliance? How can you bear to look at another manuscript?

Once I derived a plausible theory that you were triplets and that that was how you did it all. Doris C, the farm-hand housewife; Doris B, the administrator; and, above all, Doris A, the writer-teacher. I begin to believe absolutely in my secret explanation.

At a party one night I divulge this theory to Lowry, and one never knows

what the Judge thinks. Encouraged by his silence, I ask, "How does it feel to live in a house with three attractive women, but to be married to only one of them? How do you tell them apart?" And he answers, "That's their problem."

So now I have retired and years go by in which I never see you. Five years, ten. But I hear better and better reports of your writing, your teaching. Will you never burn out? And then one night I break my hermit life to have dinner with a thoroughly unassuming, almost humble man and we talk about you and his excitement at having met you. I tell him that whatever else, there will never be a better teacher. He mentions he would like maybe to give some money to the writing program. Then the announcement comes: The man, Ben Jones III, is willing to put up a third of the million dollars for a Doris Betts Distinguished Professorship in Creating Writing.

The uncloseted sentimentalist, Betty Smith, has a line in *A Tree Grows in Brooklyn* in which Francie in a moment of joy says, "My Cup runneth over." I feel and think that mine does too. Do you remember the day when Miss Cummings gave you not one but three stamps? And when you went back the next day she asked, "What did you do with all those stamps I gave you yesterday?" A million dollars!

Now you have taught for over thirty years, longer than any other UNC creative writing teacher I know, except for that grand and considerate Phillips Russell, who began the writing programs on campus in 1934 and taught most elegantly, first in the English Department, and then in Journalism until 1968.

"*I have done the State some service and they know it well. . . .*"

We started so simply in 1966 our teaching careers. Your hard work and destiny have moved you more and more into a public life. Mine, through inborn nature, and my soul's demand, has earned me the right to a more and more private life. Sometimes when I think of those days of building up the Creative Writing Program and teaching our hearts out, you seem so important and essential and so very far away.

Last night, by chance, I opened a volume that contained both *Out of Africa* and *Shadows in the Grass.* Isaac Denisen has gone back to Denmark. Kamante, the little native she has found, his legs covered with sores, in the roadside grass near her home, has gone down to Nairobi to dictate a note. He has sought out a scribe to perform the task of writing a letter to his teacher who has taught him English, cooking, dignity, and a way out of misery. He dictates to the scribe his letter of wonderment and love, and he ends it with the simple words, with which I, too, will end my note to you: "*May God bless you now and then.*"

Max

A Special Announcement

[At this point Chancellor Michael Hooker was invited to the podium for a special announcement. The chancellor revealed that as a result of a generous offer from an admirer of the honoree, a Doris Betts Distinguished Professorship in Creating Writing was being proposed. The admirer had offered to give a third of the million dollars needed to establish the endowed professorship; another third would be raised by a committee headed by William M. Moore, Jr., of Raleigh, and the remaining third would be provided from state funds. Chancellor Hooker then introduced the admirer, Ben M. Jones III of Hendersonville, North Carolina, and Naples, Florida, who recounted that he had been so impressed by Professor Betts's influence as a teacher, writer, and public servant that he wanted to assure the continued primacy of the creative writing program by helping to create a position that would honor the name of Doris Betts and attract future teachers/writers to carry on the Betts tradition at the University. The chancellor thanked Ben Jones and then accepted a check for $1,000.00 from the North Caroliniana Society as the first contribution in the public drive for matching funds.]

Presentation of the Award

Willis P. Whichard, President of the Society

When in 1991 the Society expressed a desire to acquire a tangible symbol of its annual North Caroliniana Society Award (previously the award had been in the form of a certificate), it called upon board member John Sanders, whose interest in and knowledge of silver is well known. That confidence was not misplaced, for John and his wife Ann located and the Society purchased the sterling two-handled cup that sits before you. This is not just "another" cup; it already had a distinguished history connecting the family of Thomas Jefferson with that of Calvin Coolidge. The story, too lengthy to be repeated at this hour, will be found in the Society's annual report for 1990-1991. The trophy was appropriately engraved with the wording, "The North Caroliniana Society Award for distinguished contributions to North Carolina history and culture." Then, to provide for its proper exhibition in the North Carolina Collection, John and Ann designed and arranged for the crafting of a handsome mahogany stand, together with silver plates on which the names of recipients are engraved. The entire ensemble graces the North Carolina Collection Reading Room. Tonight, however, we are privileged to see the cup and its upper base on the table in front of us.

John and Ann also selected modest sterling tumblers, one of which is appropriately engraved and presented to each recipient. The simplicity of the tumbler is emblematic of the North Caroliniana Society's dedication to "Substance, not Show," the most essential quality that we seek in each year's recipient.

This year's recipient epitomizes substance over show. Doris, please step forward to accept this symbol of the North Caroliniana Society Award and for such remarks as you wish to make.

Acceptance of the Award

Doris Waugh Betts

Once when Jack Benny received an award, he responded by saying, "I don't deserve this, but then I have arthritis and I don't deserve that, either."

But this has been a night I'll never forget, undeserved or not. If I were standing any taller, my ears would pop. Aristotle said, "Without friends no one would choose to live." I would insert "friends and family."

Lately the media have been firm in their rejection of "recovered memories," often dredged up by means of hypnosis, but maybe we parents should concentrate on our children's plain memories! Maybe we could hypnotize our children to forget. Thank you, Lewellyn, but I hope that D in home economics doesn't make these academics rethink the whole thing!

And it's just like Max Steele, who never wants to be thought of as sentimental, to send me a lump in the throat long distance. If it were not for Max, I would not be standing here tonight, and if it were not for the example of his remarkable teaching, I'd have given up classroom work early.

And Liz Evans, who learned more about me than she cared to know while she was writing her biography for Twayne, has still surprised me with her fresh eloquence. She's also a product of the First A.R.P. Church of Statesville, North Carolina, and a walking instance of the Protestant work ethic.

As for the instigation of a Betts Chair in Creative Writing, Chancellor Hooker and Ben Jones have simply overwhelmed me. On behalf of future students who will benefit, I thank you from the heart.

I'm touched and grateful for all of tonight's speakers, and also to all of you who have come tonight to remind me of how much I owe to how many.

Those of you who suffered through this afternoon's talk about my love for this university already know that the North Caroliniana Society Award is especially symbolic to this Gemini who just passed one more relentless birthday and who next month will be entering phased retirement.

But my mood—especially after this evening—is of celebration, not

melancholy.

As Gypsy Rose Lee once said, "I've got everything I had thirty years ago, except now it's a lot lower."

I hope on this new schedule to read more published books in addition to student manuscripts; it's hard just to keep up with the outpouring of writing talent by friends and neighbors during this renaissance of literary output in North Carolina. And I hope to write more fiction myself, and to ignore the smart aleck who once said, "I hear you're writing a book—why don't you just buy one; it's faster."

I'll also keep reading the growing amount of good prose by our own creative writing graduates. You know what they say about university graduates: an alumnus who got a science degree goes out into the world asking "Why does it work?" The engineering major asks "How does it work?" An accounting student now out in the world asks "How much will it cost?" But the Carolina grad who studied creative writing asks "Do you want fries with that?"

Producing stories and poems may not be a good way to make a living, but it's a wonderful way to make a life.

In closing I want to thank all of you for reminding me how fortunate I am, how blessed by friends and family, how contented by the thirty-two years of doing the work that mattered most to me.

You can picture me later tonight as praying the same prayer as the child who knelt to say, "Lord, if you can't make me a better boy, don't worry about it. I'm having a real good time as it is."

Thank you for this "real good time."

NORTH CAROLINIANA SOCIETY AWARD RECIPIENTS

1978	*Paul Green*	*1990*	*Burke Davis*
1979	*Albert Coates*	*1991*	*Lawrence F. London*
1980	*Sam J. Ervin, Jr.*	*1992*	*Frank H. Kenan*
1981	*Sam Ragan*	*1993*	*Charles Kuralt*
1982	*Gertrude Sprague Carraway*	*1994*	*North Carolina Collection*
1983	*John Fries Blair*	*1994*	*Archie K. Davis*
1984	*William C. & Ida H. Friday*	*1994*	*H. G. Jones*
1985	*William S. Powell*	*1995*	*LeRoy T. Walker*
1986	*Mary D.B.T. & James Semans*	*1995*	*J. Carlyle Sitterson*
1987	*David Stick*	*1996*	*Hugh MacRae Morton*
1988	*William McWhorter Cochrane*	*1997*	*John L. Sanders*
1989	*Emma Neal Morrison*	*1998*	*Doris Waugh Betts*

Doris Betts delivered her touching public address, "My Love Affair with Carolina," before a capacity audience. Then at the banquet she listened as Chancellor Michael Hooker (left) introduced Ben M. Jones III, who pledged a third of the proposed million-dollar-endowed Doris Betts Distinguished Professorship in Creative Writing. (All photos by Fred Stipe and Jerry Cotten unless otherwise indicated.)

Doris Betts listens to tributes by (left to right, top to bottom) H. G. Jones, Elizabeth Evans, Lewellyn Betts, and William Friday (reading a literary valentine from Max Steele); accepts award from President Willis Whichard; gives a response; poses with son-in-law Thomas Mroz, daughter Lewellyn, and Doris's husband, Judge Lowry M. Betts; and joins Chancellor Hooker, Ben Jones, and Lowry Betts.

More than 200 friends recognized Doris's distinguished career with their presence at the banquet and reception in the Carolina Inn. Among them were (all with Doris) President Molly Broad; Burke Davis and daughter Angela Davis-Gardner; Holly Mack Bell; John and Ann Sanders; John Justice; Leslie Boney, Jr.; Mary and Harry Gatton; and Judge Dickson Phillips.

More Friends: Doris Betts and Frances Mason; Anna Hayes Ragland, Mary Louise Davis, and Betty Kenan; Rollie Tillman, Sally Davis, and Archie H. Davis; Betty Kenan and Carmen and Michael Hooker; Nancy Lilly and Julia Jones Daniels; Lew and Dannye Romine Powell and Jack Betts; Marcella Grendler and Wesley and Carolyn Wallace; Trent and Anna Hayes Ragland.

And more friends: Nancy Lilly and Georgia Carroll Kyser; Charles Shaffer and Trent Ragland; Milly Barranger and Anna Ragland Hayes; Shelby Stephenson and Laurence Avery; Mary Louise Davis, Betty Kenan, and Carmen Hooker; Amanda Stipe, Gladys Coates, and Fred Stipe; Doris Betts and Bob Anthony; and Doris Betts and Florence Peacock.

Chronology

Compiled by Elizabeth Evans

1932	Doris June (Waugh) Betts born 4 June in Iredell County, North Carolina, only child of William Elmore and Mary Ellen (Freeze) Waugh.
1946-1950	Works part-time on *Statesville Daily Record.*
1950	Graduates from Statesville High School.
1950-1953	Enters Woman's College of the University of North Carolina (now University of North Carolina at Greensboro); leaves without finishing a degree.
1950-1957	Works as stringer for UPI and various North Carolina newspapers.
1952	Marries Lowry Matthews Betts, a law student, who retires from legal career in 1997 as district judge of Chatham and Orange Counties.
1953	Awarded Phi Beta Kappa; wins *Mademoiselle* College Fiction Contest for "Mr. Shawn and Father Scott" (included in *Best Short Stories of 1953*); daughter Doris Lewellyn Betts born; family moves to Chapel Hill.
1953-1954	Works part-time on *Chapel Hill Weekly.*
1954	Wins UNC-Putnam Booklength Manuscript Prize for *The Gentle Insurrection and Other Stories*; teaches typing for North Carolina Highway Patrol; son David Lowry Betts born.
1955-1957	Works as office manager and secretary-treasurer for Simplified Farm Record Book Company (advertising, printing), Chapel Hill.
1956	Serves as editor of *North Carolina Writers News* for the North Carolina Writers Conference.
1957	Family moves to Sanford, North Carolina; Lowry Betts joins law firm of Pittman and Staton; publishes first novel, *Tall Houses in Winter.*
1957-1958	Works full-time as feature writer and daily columnist for *Sanford Daily Herald.*
1958	Wins Sir Walter Raleigh Award for fiction.

1958-1959	Awarded Guggenheim Fellowship in Creative Writing.
1958-1960	Serves on editorial board of *N. C. Democrat.*
1960	Works as full-time editor, Sanford *News-Leader*; son Erskine Moore Betts born.
1962-1964	Serves on North Carolina Charter Tercentenary Commission.
1964	*The Scarlet Thread* published.
1965	Wins Sir Walter Raleigh Award again.
1965	*The Astronomer and Other Stories* published.
1966-1974	Joins English Department, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, as lecturer.
1970	*Creative Writing: The Short Story* published (textbook for correspondence course, Extension Division, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill).
1971	Is visiting lecturer in creative writing at Duke University.
1972	*The River to Pickle Beach* published.
1972-1978	Serves as director of Freshman-Sophomore English, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.
1973	*Beasts of the Southern Wild and Other Stories* is finalist for the National Book Award; wins Tanner Award for distinguished undergraduate teaching; wins Sir Walter Raleigh Award for third time.
1974	Promoted to associate professor, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.
1975	Receives the North Carolina Award for Literature, the state's highest award for literary achievement.
1975-1976	Named director of North Carolina Fellows Program, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.
1978	Promoted to professor, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill; named to National Humanities Faculty.
1978-1980	Serves on Literature Panel, National Endowment for the Arts, chair 1979-1980.
1978-1981	Named assistant dean, Honors Program, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.
1980	Named Alumni Distinguished Professor, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill; wins Katherine Carmichael Award for teaching; inducted into Order of the Golden Fleece; elected to membership in the North Caroliniana Society; moved with husband to Araby Farm, Pittsboro, North Carolina.
1981	*Heading West* published. *Violet* (film version of "The Ugliest Pilgrim") wins Academy award for Best Short Feature; wins Special Grand Jury Award, Houston Film Festival.
1981-1984	Serves on Board of Governors, University of North Carolina Press.
1982-1985	Elected chair of the faculty, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

1983	Wins John Dos Passos Award; wins Distinguished Service Award for Women (Chi Omega).
1984	Serves as judge for PEN-Faulkner Awards.
1985	*Beasts of the Southern Wild and Other Stories* is included in *3 by 3. Masterpieces of the Southern Gothic.*
1986	Named a Celebrated Teacher by the Association of Departments of English, Modern Language Association; Doris Betts Teaching Award established by the English Department of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill; serves as consultant to Southern Growth Policies Board and writes report, *Halfway Home and a Long Way to Go.*
1987	Nominated as candidate for chancellor, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.
1988	Serves as consultant to Florida Forestry Commission and writes report, *Turning Over a New Leaf.*
1988-1989	Named chair, Committee on Athletics and the University, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.
1989	Awarded Medal of Merit in the Short Story, American Academy and Institute of Arts and Letters; wins Salem Award for Literary Achievement; awarded honorary degree, University of North Carolina at Greensboro.
1991	Wins R. Hunt Parker Memorial Award, North Carolina Literary and Historical Association, for literary achievement; wins University of North Carolina Alumni Award for distinguished teaching.
1992	Wins John Tyler Caldwell Award, North Carolina Humanities Council; named faculty director, University of North Carolina Publishing Institute; named to Board of Trustees, Union Theological Seminary, Richmond, Virginia; named to Board of Trustees, National Humanities Center; elected to Fellowship of Southern Writers.
1994	*Souls Raised from the Dead* published; named on *New York Times* list of 20 best books for 1994.
1995	Wins Southern Book Award, Southern Book Critics Circle.
1997	Receives Ethel Fortner Writer & Community Service Award from St. Andrew's Presbyterian College; *Violet,* a musical based on "The Ugliest Pilgrim," opens in New York and wins eight awards; *The Sharp Teeth of Love* published.
1998	Receives the North Caroliniana Society Award for distinguished contributions to the history, literature, and culture of her native state.

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[Through mid-1998]

Compiled by Elizabeth Evans

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The North Caroliniana Society, Inc.

North Carolina Collection
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Chartered on 11 September 1975 as a private nonprofit corporation under provisions of Chapter 55A of the *General Statutes of North Carolina*, the North Caroliniana Society is dedicated to the promotion of increased knowledge and appreciation of North Carolina's heritage. This it accomplishes in a variety of ways: encouragement of scholarly research and writing in and teaching of state and local history; publication of documentary materials, including the numbered, limited-edition *North Caroliniana Society Imprints* and *North Caroliniana Society Keepsakes*; sponsorship of professional and lay conferences, seminars, lectures, and exhibitions; commemoration of historic events, including sponsorship of markers and plaques; and, especially, through assistance to the North Carolina Collection and North Carolina Collection Gallery of the University of North Carolina Library and other cultural organizations with kindred objectives.

Incorporated by H. G. Jones, William S. Powell, and Louis M. Connor, Jr., who soon were joined by a distinguished group of North Carolinians, the Society was limited to one hundred members for the first decade. It elects from time to time additional individuals meeting its strict criterion of "adjudged performance" in service to their state's culture—i.e., those who have demonstrated a continuing interest in and support of the historical, literary, and cultural heritage of North Carolina. The Society, a tax-exempt organization under provisions of Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code, expects service rather than dues. For its programs, it depends upon the contributions, bequests, and devises of its members and friends. Its IRS number is 56-1119848. Upon request, contributions to the Society may be counted toward Chancellor's Club membership. The Society administers a fund, given in 1987 by the Research Triangle Foundation in honor of its retiring board chairman and the Society's longtime president, from which more than 150 Archie K. Davis Fellowships have been awarded to scholars conducting research in North Carolina's historical and cultural resources.

A highlight of the Society's year is the presentation of the North Caroliniana Society Award to an individual or organization for long and distinguished service in the encouragement, production, enhancement, promotion, and preservation of North Caroliniana. Starting with Paul Green, the Society has recognized Tar Heels such as Albert Coates, Sam J. Ervin, Jr., Sam Ragan, Gertrude S. Carraway, John Fries Blair, William and Ida Friday, William S. Powell, Mary and James Semans, David Stick, William M. Cochrane, Emma Neal Morrison, Burke Davis, Lawrence F. London, Frank H. Kenan, Charles Kuralt, Archie K. Davis, H. G. Jones, J. Carlyle Sitterson, Leroy T. Walker, Hugh M. Morton, John L. Sanders, Doris Betts, and the North Carolina Collection (on its sesquicentennial).

The Society has its headquarters in the North Carolina Collection, the "Conscience of North Carolina," which seeks to preserve for present and future generations all that has been or is published *by* North Carolinians regardless of subject or language and *about* North Carolina and North Carolinians regardless of author or source. In this mission the Collection's clientele is broader than the University community; indeed, it is the entire citizenry of North Carolina as well as those outside the state whose research extends to North Carolina or North Carolinians. Members of the North Caroliniana Society share a very special relationship to this unique Collection that traces its beginnings back to 1844 and stands unchallenged as the largest and most comprehensive repository in America of published materials relating to a single state. The North Carolina Collection Gallery, opened in 1988, adds exhibition and interpretive dimensions to the Collection's traditional services. These combined resources fulfill the vision of President David L. Swain (1801-1868), who founded the Collection; Librarian Louis Round Wilson (1876-1979), who nurtured it; and Philanthropist John Sprunt Hill (1869-1961), who generously endowed it. All North Carolinians are enriched by this precious legacy. A leaflet on the Collection is available without charge.

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